Distance Learning's Top Ten Things
You Shouldn't Do[*]

Recently a list of the "Top Ten Things You Shouldn't Do" was found while surfing the Internet. They are for distance learning educators, facilitators, and others. Feel free to add to the list.

1. Failing to acknowledge participants at a remote site (and failing to call on them by name in the case of small classes).
2. Failing to send materials far enough in advance, or packaging materials in a way that makes them cumbersome to find and use.
3. Failing to make contingency plans (for technical problems).
4. Not addressing audio problems promptly because the audio "sounds" OK at your site.
5. Thinking you can "wing it" because you are a great classroom instructor.
6. Not planning for who will work equipment in remote room(s).
7. Using lecture because you've heard lectures are easy to do by video.
8. Failing to set ground rules and expectations at the beginning of class.
9. Not starting or stopping on time (repercussions for sites that have multipurpose rooms or videoconference meetings immediately following class).

—Janet Bernhard

Here are some more:

10. Failing to make sure students can get into classrooms at the remote sites.
11. Not restructuring traditional materials, so overheads in 12-point type are completely unreadable at both sites!
12. Hiring a facilitator who has another agenda other than serving the students and who causes more trouble than she or he prevents.

—Steve Bonham

13. Having facilitators put the class camera on wide angle and leave it there so students can do their homework or catch a few winks.
14. Never getting to know your students' names. After all, it's just TV!
15. Trying to get the cameras to focus on the dry erase board and tell students it is your recreation of the dream scenes in Wayne's World.
16. Spending all class writing under the ELMO to earn your nickname "THE HAND."
17. Saying "10-4, good buddy" after remote students speak.
18. Using the document camera to show each of the 186 slides from your recent trip to the Louvre.

[*]With apologies t

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19. Phoning your remote site facilitator and directing him/her to "get a tighter shot of the cute chick's/hunk's buns on the auxiliary camera."

20. Having your students fax their exams and all homework assignments to your department chair's office.

21. Using the document camera to check for excessive ear wax.

22. During the break, forgetting to turn off the wireless microphone while you phone your significant other to discuss your intimate plans.
>   —Judith Reymond

23. Turning on the ELMO and leaving it on the whole time.

24. Standing behind the ELMO so the light arm is in front of your face the whole time.
>   —Pat Kirby

25. Teaching a distance learning course because you were made to and harboring negative feelings against whoever made you do it, especially if you aren't good at sublimating such feelings.
>   —Kathy McCracken

26. The instructor not turning his/her wireless microphone off before using the restroom.
>   —Keith Barrett

27. Not making anything relevant to students; they'll work out what's important to them on their own.

28. Clarity isn't that important, students have textbooks to help them the hard stuff.

29. Don't worry too much about a syllabus; it's just a guide. You can change it as you go, or maybe even skip it all together.

30. Not getting input from students who are there to learn from you. They can't possibly have anything valid to contribute to a discussion of the topic at hand.

31. Not communicating with your technical support team, camera operator, technician, or remote site operator. They'll do something even if it's not what you need or want.

32. Not selecting visual materials that are technically appropriate (horizontal orientation, right aspect ratio, legible, wrong color, etc.).

33. And, of course, it's really not that important to make sure that it is LEGAL to use such materials.
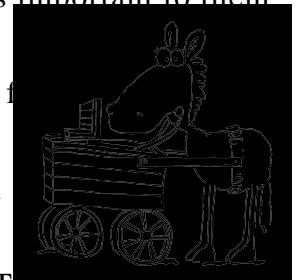
34. Just use the board if the students can't read what you're writing, they can get the general idea from your lecture comments.

35. Walking all over the classroom so the distant site students can get seasick as the camera operator or tracker tries to follow you, or just as good standing in one place and rocking from foot to foot. Anyway, it's kinda fun to see the students turn green!

> –Helen Lacy, University of Utah

36. Looking at students in front of you; in so doing, the people at the remote site feel like observers since you never look at the camera.

> –Mary Kate Hiatt

37. Failing to realize that the use of this technology is only one way to support the learners enrolled in the course.

> –Nancy McDonald

38. Getting too enamored with your computer slide show and turning the class into a quasi-TV lecture, forgetting to do those personal interaction things you normally do in a traditional classroom setting.

> –William Klemm

39. Having the instructor teaching a two-and-a-half-hour course and standing in front of the camera and podium READING from the course text for the entire two-and-a-half hours.

> –Dawn Lewis

Some Things You Should Do

Here are some well-tried tips and techniques that are used in EDNET faculty/technical training workshops:

1. Always refer to students and their school when directing a question.
2. Never, never, never become a "Talking Head."
3. Remember that EDNET distance education is fun.
4. Don't forget to talk to site facilitators every day.
5. Set high standards for your students and for yourself.
6. Pace your lessons at a speed appropriate for your students and the content.
7. Use a variety of teaching techniques in your distance learning classroom.

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8. Never wait longer than 20 minutes to establish interaction between students at different sites.
9. Be sure to visit your EDNET sites (personally) at least every three months.
10. Materials for the ELMO should be prepared in LANDSCAPE format.
11. A good "rule of thumb" for text on a page (for the ELMO or computer) is 6 x 6 (six lines of text and six words per line).

Hope you've enjoyed these comments. If you have other suggestions, additions, clarifications, or just want to chat, give us a call or email.

Thanks.

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